

**To:** R3 3WP21[R3\_3WP21@epa.gov]  
**Cc:** binetti, victoria[binetti.victoria@epa.gov]  
**From:** Bennett, Andrea  
**Sent:** Tue 3/11/2014 12:48:48 PM  
**Subject:** FW: DR 624—Disaster Research News You Can Use

fyi

Note: Big article in this month's Natural Hazards Observer about the WV incident. PDF of the issue available at:

[http://www.colorado.edu/hazards/o/archives/2014/mar14\\_observerweb.pdf](http://www.colorado.edu/hazards/o/archives/2014/mar14_observerweb.pdf)

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## **DR 624—March 6, 2014**

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## Fires Rage in Politics and on Land

Yellowstone National Park's vast wildfires in 1988, which burned nearly 800,000 acres and almost 40 percent of the park, marked a watershed in the understanding of wildfires. Before 1988, government policy was to suppress all fires at all costs. The Yellowstone fires showed how futile this was, as total suppression led to large buildups of fuel, which resulted inevitably in larger, more catastrophic fires.

In the 26 years since the Yellowstone conflagration, the lessons from those fires have been gradually implemented as fire policy. These practices include allowing natural fires to burn, increasing the practice of controlled burns, controlling fuels in populated areas, and improving safety and fire prevention advice for homeowners in hazard areas.

But the funding mechanisms have been slow to recognize that wildfires have become a major hazard affecting a broad swath of land and people. Further, some federal policies do not appear to be in agreement when it comes to addressing wildfires. For instance, President Barack Obama's new budget is calling for a change in the way the federal government pays for fighting wildfires, while his climate change policies focus on fire prevention.

Obama's proposal asks Congress to finance fire fighting the same way it deals with other large-scale natural hazards, such as hurricanes and tornadoes. Namely, when large rare events occur, such as Hurricanes Katrina or Sandy, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is authorized to exceed its budget and use a special disaster account. The Obama proposal would extend that kind of response to the agencies most involved in firefighting—the departments of Interior and Agriculture, according to the *Washington Post*. The Interior Department is responsible for America's national parks, while Agriculture houses the U.S. Forest Service.

President Obama's funding proposal emerges against a stark backdrop: since the 1988 Yellowstone fires the West has experienced a sharp increase in the number and size of large wildfires, as shown in this graph produced by *Climate Central*. And the future looks hotter. The National Research Council estimates that for every 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit of temperature increase the size of the area burned in the American West will quadruple. Global warming estimates show an increase by 2050 of between 2 and 4 degrees Fahrenheit.

In fact, the administration's Climate Change Action Plan, released last June, states federal agencies "will expand and prioritize forest and rangeland restoration efforts in order to make natural areas and communities less vulnerable to catastrophic fire."

Such preventive practices seem to be a task made for Sisyphus, as major demographic changes have put more people in the way of wildfires as they move into the wildland-urban interface (WUI). A report by the independent research firm Headwaters Economics, titled the *Rising Cost of Wildfire Protection* says that in the 1990s the

cost of federal wildfire protection was about \$1 billion a year. In the last 10 years, that cost has mushroomed to \$3 billion annually.

“This tripling of federal fire protection expenses is partly due to the more severe fire seasons, but it also results from building homes in and near forests and other wildlands that are at risk from wildfires—the Wildland-Urban Interface,” the report adds. “While protecting the private lands of the WUI is largely a state and local responsibility, the development in the WUI has raised federal wildfire costs.”

An article in the *Washington Post* highlights the rising costs of megafires. “In recent years, the most extreme 1 percent of all wildfires have consumed 30 percent of total fire suppression budgets,” the article states. “The government has spent about \$1.4 billion per year over the last 10 years fighting fires. The Rim Fire, which burned hundreds of thousands of acres near Yosemite National Park in California last year, cost more than \$100 million alone.”

The *Post* argues that the administration’s wildfire funding proposal should avoid the partisan wrangling that has paralyzed much other legislation. The Obama proposal, according to the *Post*, is based on a Senate bill sponsored by Senators Ron Wyden, Democrat of Oregon, and Michael D. Crapo, Republican of Idaho. A similar bill in the House also has bipartisan support. And a coalition of environmentalists, sportsmen, and timber producers has lobbied in support of the bill, the paper reports.

It’s hard to imagine, but it’s never too late to hope for bipartisan support on this hot-button issue.

—Dan Whipple, Editor, *The Natural Hazards Observer*

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## Disaster News Redux: Cholera in Haiti

**Illness upon Injury:** In 2010, not even a year after a devastating earthquake rocked Haiti, a cholera outbreak struck the country. The commonly accepted source of the cholera—a disease unknown in Haiti for decades before the October outbreak—was a UN peacekeeping force from Nepal stationed near the Artibonite River.

Although the United Nations didn’t directly accept responsibility for the spread, [a 2011 report](#) prepared by independent experts at UN request pointed to unsanitary conditions at the peacekeepers’ camp as the likely point of infection.

Findings from a [June report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) also “strongly suggest that contamination of the Artibonite and one of its tributaries downstream from a military camp triggered the epidemic,” according to

**Reuters**—although the CDC stressed evidence was circumstantial.

In November of 2011, the **Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti**, a U.S.-based human rights organization, called the United Nations to step up and take responsibility for the outbreak. The group filed a complaint with the Secretary General's office in New York and with the UN Haiti mission's claims unit in Port-au-Prince, according to the **Associated Press**.

While legal enforcement of the claim was considered unlikely, the case was meant to drive the United Nations to action, IJDH Director Brian Concannon told **CNN** at the time.

"The victims want the UN to respond, to provide medical treatment and build clean water and waste treatment systems," Concannon said.

After filing its initial complaint, the IJDH sought redress for victims through an internal UN process for nearly two years, but to no avail, according to its **Web site**. In October 2013, the group filed a class action lawsuit against the organization, which has claimed diplomatic immunity from legal action, according to the **New York Times**.

**Still Hurting:** Today, Haiti's cholera epidemic is the world's largest and victims seem far from receiving any sort of individual reparation, although the UN has consistently stated it is dedicated to helping Haitians overcome the disease.

A report by a United Nations-appointed humanitarian expert last week, however, urged the organization to take responsibility and punish those responsible, according to the **BBC**. Gustavo Gallon, who **was appointed** to analyze the Haiti's human rights situation in September, said that amends needed to be made so the country could move on with fighting the epidemic.

"The diplomatic difficulties around this question have to be resolved to stop the epidemic as soon possible and pay full compensation for suffering experienced," he wrote in his report according to the BBC. Currently the report is only **available in French**.

The strong statement, coupled with similar sentiments from retired UN officials and the organization's current human rights chief, could indicate that a storm is brewing at the UN and perhaps another tack could be taken, according to the **Economist**.

**Waiting to be Healed:** Meanwhile, separate of internal conflicts at the UN, the United States must decide whether it will take a position in the IJDH lawsuit by Friday, according to an analysis in **Al Jazeera America**.

If the United States—which provides 22 percent of the UN budget—decides not to intervene in the suit, it could possibly work with Gallon's recommendations to tip the scale toward compensating victims. But, the analysis warns, the U.S. fiscal interest could also come into play.

The IDJH and 26 other Haitian-American groups have beseeched Secretary of State John Kerry not to let that happen.

“We urge you, and your Department, to stand up for justice and international law by refusing to intervene [in the lawsuit], and letting the cholera victims take their case to court...” they wrote in a [joint letter to Kerry](#). “This insistence on impunity sets a dangerous example in Haiti, and profoundly undermines the organization’s credibility and ability to carry out any of its missions.”

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## **First Quick Response Research Report on the Colorado Floods Released**

The Natural Hazards Center is pleased to announce the release of the first of our series of Quick Response Reports on the 2013 Colorado Floods.

[\*Women in the Face of Disaster: Incorporating Gender Perspectives into Disaster Policy\*](#) by Bridgette Cram of Florida International University explores vulnerability and resilience of women during the flooding and makes recommendations on how these factors can be better incorporated into emergency management planning and preparedness.

Along with being the first of six Quick Response projects detailing the effects of the flood, Cram’s report, QR247, is also one of the first to be published in our new electronic format.

The format was designed to make it easier for researchers using the report to build bibliographies, access online resources, and take advantage of our Natural Hazards Library resources—but for those of you that are still paper friendly, never fear. The reports are also easy to navigate, save as a PDF, or print. Head over to our [Quick Response Grant Program](#) page to check it out and learn more about the program.

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## **The Latest Natural Hazards Observer Is Online (and in Print!)**

The latest edition of the *Natural Hazards Observer* is now available online. Featured articles from the **March 2014 Observer** include:

- Chemical Spill in West Virginia
- Heats and Floods Forcing Migration
- The Beer-Volcano Nexus
- Compromising Palestinians for Israel's Security
- Observations from 25 Years Since the *Exxon Valdez*

And don't forget, for those of you who would rather get the print edition, we're now able to offer readers an *Observer* subscription for only \$15 per year. Those interested in subscribing can sign up on our **subscription page** using a credit card, or be invoiced later.

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## **Call Outs: Calls for Papers, Abstracts, Proposals, and More**

### [Call for Applicants](#)

#### **National Advisory Council**

#### **Federal Emergency Management Agency**

**Deadline: March 14, 2014**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is seeking applications from individuals interested in serving on the Agency's 35-member National Advisory Council. Council members advise the FEMA administrator on emergency management issues and provide community input. Three-year terms are available for those with expertise in emergency management, emergency response, local and tribal governments, health science, communications, infrastructure protection, standards settings, or disabilities. For more information and to learn how to submit an application, visit the NAC Web Site.

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### [Call for Applications](#)

#### **Senior Undergraduate Scholarship**

#### **Association of Dam Safety Officials**

**Deadline: March 31, 2014**

The Association of Dam Safety Officials is accepting applications for its 2014-2015 Senior Undergraduate Scholarship. Applicants should be U.S. citizens enrolled in an engineering program and interested in pursuing a career in hydrology, hydraulics, or a geotechnical discipline. Scholarships are awarded to individuals graduating in May or December of 2015. For full details and to submit an application, visit the scholarship page on the ADSO Web site.

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### [Call for Entries](#)

## **Engineering For You Video Contest**

### **National Academy of Engineering**

**Deadline: March 31, 2014**

The National Academy of Engineering is accepting entries for a video contest celebrating its 50th anniversary. Applicants in six categories are encouraged to submit two-minute video on ways that engineering has enhanced, or will enhance, the quality of human life and meets the needs of society. Prizes of up to \$25,000 will be awarded. For more information and to submit your video, visit the contest Web site.

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## **Some New Web Resources**

### **SPIA Index**

The Sperry-Piltz Ice Accumulation Index, or SPIA, predicts the “projected footprint, total ice accumulation, an resulting potential damage from approaching ice storms.” It is (as the site advertises) what the Fukita Scale is to tornadoes or what the Saffir-Simpson Scale is to hurricanes. In other words, it lets you know when to batten down the hatches. The index rates storms from 0 (not a big deal) to 5 (outages of several weeks). The index uses clear and colorful maps to present its forecasts. And if you didn’t think ice storms are all that damaging, check out the photos in the “See the SPIA Gallery” section.

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### ***A Guidebook for Integrating NIMS for Personnel and Resources at Airports***

Airport personnel looking to beef up their incident management plans will appreciate this new publication from the Transportation Research Board. The guide covers ways to incorporate the National Incident Management System into existing response plans. It includes sample airport plans, and it even provides a matrix of suggested training for airport staff.

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### **Interior Geospatial Emergency Management System (IGEMS)**

IGEMS provides an interactive map with an overview about current natural hazard events in the United States. Clear and easy to use, this site is useful for people who travel across state lines, especially by car. For instance, the first day we checked it out, we were shocked to find a high wind watch in Cheyenne and Laramie, Wyoming, when we were scheduled to drive up that way. High winds in Wyoming... who knew?!?

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### **National Incident Command System (NICS)**

The Next Generation Incident Command System is a “mobile, web-based command and control environment for dynamically escalating incidents from first alarm to extreme scale that facilitates collaboration across [multiple] levels of preparedness, planning, response, and recovery for all-risk/all-hazards events.” About 255 emergency management agencies in California have been testing the system. The site provides login for training or for use in real incidents—once you’ve registered.

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### **Hurricane Sandy Grant Information Tool**

Even though Hurricane Sandy is more than a year in the past, there are still plenty of nonprofit organizations struggling to meet the needs of people affected. Luckily, the New York Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery has an answer. The Hurricane Sandy Grant Information Tool offers a wealth of information on grants and other resources available to nonprofits serving the state. The tool contains information on cash awards and other types of assistance, and it even includes a section on grant writing, so your organization can improve its chances of getting the help it needs.

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### **Community Disaster Resilience for Buildings and Infrastructure Lifelines**

This new program of the National Institute of Standards and Technology has big plans to make communities more resilient by focusing on the role played by buildings and infrastructure. The program will start by developing a framework guidance for disaster resilience and then follow up by creating a disaster resilience panel. Check out the Web site for more information about the program and NIST’s plans for engaging a broad range of stakeholders in the process, including a [series of workshops](#) on the topic.

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## **Conferences and Events**

[Below are some recent announcements received by the Natural Hazards Center. For a comprehensive list of upcoming hazards-related meetings, visit our Web site at [www.colorado.edu/hazards/resources/conferences.html](http://www.colorado.edu/hazards/resources/conferences.html).]

**April 2-3, 2014**

**West Coast Storm and Disaster Planning**

**EUCI**

**Portland, Oregon**

**Cost and Registration: \$1195 before March 31, open until filled**

This conference will focus on the challenges faced by utility companies in preparing for

and responding to disasters that are prevalent on the West Coast. Topics include mutual aid logistics, using the incident command system, communication strategies, cooperating with municipalities, and federal, state, and local response planning.

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**April 21, 2014**

**Emergency Management Symposium**

**Baylor Health Care System**

**Dallas, Texas**

**Cost and Registration: Free, open until filled**

This symposium will examine complex issues related to health care and emergencies and disasters, as well as identify opportunities for collaboration between multiple disciplines. Topics include the West, Texas, fertilizer plant explosion, the 2013 ESF8 tornado in Oklahoma, radiological threats, chemical suicides, and disaster behavioral health.

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**April 30 to May 3, 2014**

**Annual Meeting**

**Seismological Society of America**

**Anchorage, Alaska**

**Cost and Registration: \$540 before March 23, closes April 18**

This annual meeting of the Seismological Society of America is open to anyone with an interest in seismic events. Topics include arrays, imaging, and seismometry; great subduction quakes; tsunami science; earthquake engineering; quake simulation; paleoseismology; hazard mapping; and induced earthquakes.

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**May 6-7, 2014**

**U.S. Catastrophe Modeling Conference**

**EQECAT**

**Fort Lauderdale, Florida**

**Cost and Registration: \$995 before March 28, open until filled**

This conference addresses issues of catastrophic risk modeling for insurers and reinsurers. Topics include managing flood risk, validating models, earthquake and offshore energy modeling, loss simulations, designing flood insurance programs, Super Cat hurricanes, and Pacific Northwest earthquake scenarios.

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**May 11-16, 2014**

**Governor's Hurricane Conference**

**Florida Governor's Hurricane Conference**

## **Orlando, Florida**

### **Cost and Registration: \$200 before March 14, closes May 7**

This conference will provide hurricane-focused emergency management training for businesses, elected officials, and the media. Topics include the role of shelter transition teams, Florida's regional evacuation studies, urban search and rescue, social media, wind forecasting, private sector disaster response, and infamous Florida hurricanes.

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## **Jobs, Jobs, Jobs**

### **Senior Emergency Management Specialist**

**Colorado Springs Utility**

**Colorado Springs, Colorado**

**Salary: \$77,106 to \$96,387**

**Deadline: March 13, 2014**

This position is responsible for ensuring the continuity of critical business functions during disasters and emergencies. Duties include managing all aspects of business continuity projects, developing and maintaining emergency operation plans, conducting continuity drills and exercises, implementing emergency preparedness tools, raising awareness of business continuity practices, and coordinating with external emergency response agencies. Knowledge of emergency operations and the Incident Command System, risk and business impact analysis experience, and the ability to draft emergency and business continuity plans are required. Emergency Manager or Business Continuity Professional certification is preferred.

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### **Technological Hazards Program Specialist, GS-9**

**Federal Emergency Management Agency**

**Kansas City, Missouri**

**Salary: \$47,923 to \$90,344**

**Deadline: March 17, 2014**

This position administers the Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program for the states of Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri. Duties include reviewing state and local radiological emergency plans for adherence to FEMA and Nuclear Regulatory Commission criteria, communicating with state and local authorities on compliance issues, and developing exercises to test response capabilities. One year of experience at the GS-8 level, familiarity with Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program regulations, and knowledge of evaluation and inspection techniques are required.

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### **Disaster and Emergency Management Major Research Project Supervisor**

**Royal Roads University**

**Victoria, British Columbia**

**Salary: Not listed**

**Deadline: March 28, 2014**

This associate faculty contract position is responsible for supervising a group of 10 graduate students as they complete their final research projects in the Disaster and Emergency Management distance learning program. Duties include guiding students in developing their research prospectus, reviewing ethics applications, and providing supervision and support in the study and writing of the final report. A PhD in emergency management or a related field, graduate supervisory experience, and experience with web-based education is required.

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### **Caribbean Disaster Response Project Manager**

**Habitat for Humanity**

**Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic**

**Salary: Not listed**

**Deadline: March 28, 2014**

This position is responsible for developing the disaster risk reduction and response strategy in Habitat's Latin America/Caribbean region. Duties include implementing and managing disaster response projects in field locations throughout the region, building relationships and networking with other humanitarian organizations, assisting in increasing shelter and housing capacity, developing disaster response processes and protocols, and pursue funding opportunities. A bachelor's degree in business, finance, or a related field; five years experience working with shelters or settlements, and fluency in English and Spanish are required.

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## **Webinars, Training, and Education**

### **Webinar**

**March 12, 2014, 1:30-2:30 p.m. EDT**

**Boulder Flood Response—EOC Operations**

**Columbus Public Health Office of Emergency Preparedness**

**Cost and Registration: Free, register online**

This webinar will feature Amy Danzl of the Boulder Office of Emergency Management, who will share the experiences of the City and County of Boulder in launching a sustained response and recovery effort to the 2013 Colorado floods. Danzl's presentation is part of a series of webinars that look at lessons learned from emergency management situations. Learn more about the series at the registration link above.

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**Course**

**June 30 to July 11, 2014, The Hague, The Netherlands**

**Multilevel Water Governance**

**The Hague Academy**

**Cost and Registration: \$4,365, closes April 11**

This course will address issues of integrated, multilevel water governance using theoretical concepts and case studies. Attendees will learn how to increase social and financial accountability, gain insights on legal and political frameworks related to water governance, and broaden their knowledge of international best practices.

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Contributions of jobs, conferences, and other content to this newsletter can be sent to [jolie.breeden@colorado.edu](mailto:jolie.breeden@colorado.edu). Please include "for Disaster Research" in the subject line.

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Natural Hazards Center

483 UCB

Boulder, CO 80309-0483

Contact Us: [hazctr@colorado.edu](mailto:hazctr@colorado.edu) | (303) 492-6818

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